

The Duty of CONSIDERATION *in a Time of*
ADVERSITY.

A 4.
S E R M O N

Preached at

O T T E R Y,
I N T H E
C O U N T Y O F D E V O N,
M A R C H 22, 1767.

B E I N G

The LORD'S-DAY after the LATE
G R E A T F I R E.

By SAMUEL BUNCOMBE.

L O N D O N :

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The Duke of Devonshire

FERMION

OF THE

COUNTY OF DEVON

MANOR



BY JAMES

JOHN D. O'NEILL

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE occasion of the following Discourse is expressed in the Title Page. The Fire broke out on the 16th of March, between nine and ten in the morning (mercifully timed!) and continued raging till between five and six in the evening. In that space about fifty dwellings, in the center of the town, together with the market-house, were consumed.

This is *the third Fire* by which OTTERY has been made to smart within these two years. Lord! stay thy hand! give us to hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it.—My aim was, on the following Sabbath
to

to speak a word in season. What was then spoken from the Pulpit, now comes from the Press. I am fully sensible it will not bear the Critic's *eye*; but if it does good to the Sufferer's *heart*, it will not repent me that I have yielded a trembling consent to the request of an affectionate People. May a Divine Blessing attend it!

Ottery, April 3,
1767.

S. B.

E R R A T A.

Page 14. line 22. for xxiii. read xxviii.

35. — 8. for *word*, read *world*.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 14.

— *In the day of adversity, consider.*

I NEED not tell you that the present time is a day of adversity with *us*. The hand of the Lord has been stretched out against us. We have been forced to flee from our habitations, which have fallen a prey to the devouring flames, and are now become ruinous heaps. My design is, from these words, to lead myself and you to a suitable improvement of the alarming Providence. In this, the day of our adversity, let us consider. Too, too apt are we to be vain, and frothy, and inconsiderate. This was the great charge which God often brought against his people of old; my people doth not consider *. There were many amongst them who regarded not the works

* Isaiah i. 3.

of the Lord, neither considered the operation of his hands †.—Now a *day of adversity* is the most proper *time* for consideration. If we don't consider *then*, 'tis much if we *ever* do, to any good purpose. A flow of ease, success and prosperity, renders the mind dissipated, and dissolute ; but troubles and disappointments have a tendency to collect and compose the thoughts. They may throw us into a hurry at first, but they make way for cool and sedate reflection. To this purpose is that in the Prophet Jeremiah, xxii. 21, 22. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear. While full and at ease, there was no dealing with them ; they had something else to mind that was more pleasing. Well, says God, I'll take another course with thee ; the wind shall eat up all thy pastors ; then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.—*Without* consideration, we can never *answer the end* of afflictive providences. What is the design of God in visiting us with a rod, but to reduce our straying feet, and bring

† Isaiah v. 12.

us nearer to himself, in respect of dependence, obedience and communion? But if we do not *consider*, this end cannot possibly be answered: for, the mind leads the man; and all the other powers of the soul act under its conduct. I thought on my ways, says David, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies *; first *thought*, and then *turned*. David's troubles (amongst which the burning of Ziklag was one) put him upon self-reflection; and that reduced him from his wanderings. Men are impenitent and unreformed under the rod, because they are inconsiderate. Jer. viii. 6. No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? The Apostle tells us †, that though chastening be for the present not joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. But to *whom* does it yield this fruit? why to them that are *exercised* thereby; or, that *exercise themselves* in a way of serious thoughtfulness and consideration.

We are not influenced either by ordinances or providences, in consequence of any

* Psal. cxix. 59.

† Heb. xii. 11.

virtue inherent in them ; but as they are a means to give a check to the heedlessness of our spirits, and suitably to actuate our thoughts. What is the reason why so many rousing dispensations, both of the one kind and of the other, prove ineffectual, and leave us no better, but rather worse than they found us ? 'tis plainly this ; we are incogitant and inconsiderate.

That *the present tremendous visitation* may not be lost upon us, there are three general heads of Consideration, which we should do well to attend unto—The *sins* that might have *occasioned* it—The *duties* and *graces* it calls for—And the *supports* and *Consolations* it admits of.

I. Let us consider the *sins* that might have *occasioned* this dreadful desolation.

The evil of *suffering* is always brought upon us for the evil of *sin*. There *may be other* occasions ; but still, *sin* in general is the cause of *all adversity*. It would be inexcusable not to look upon this doleful devastation in the light of a *punishment*. For,
however

however God may afflict a particular person here and there for the *trial of his graces*, and to set him up as a *pattern of patience* and submission to the Divine Will, yet these *extensive* calamities have, doubtless, always something *judicial* in them. Indeed it would be *hard*, it would be *unjust*, to reproach the *unhappy Sufferers*, as if *they* must be greater sinners than those who *escaped* the sad calamity. Our Lord cautions us against *such* a censorious spirit, in the reply which he made to some who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish *. Many that are dear to God, the objects of his highest approbation and most complacential love, have been made to drink deep of the cup of his wrath. Job was a perfect man, yet he lost his substance and servants, and his children too. Winds, and *flames*, and wicked men, agitated by the Devil, reduced him from a state of the

* Luke xiii. 2, 3.

greatest affluence, to a state of the greatest indigence. — Let not those, therefore, who have *escaped* the fiery ruin, *condemn* those that have been *involved* in it; nor, on the other hand, let those who have been involved in it *justify themselves*. If we said we were righteous, and did not *deserve* this evil that is come upon us, our own mouths, our own hearts, would condemn us. All this is come upon us for our iniquity, and for our great trespasses which we have committed against the Lord.

But what are the sins which may be supposed to have occasioned this dreadful desolation? I answer, in the

1. First place, A disregard of God, and his providence.

Though we profess to believe that God is, yet have not many of us lived as without God in the world? * How seldom, and with how much coldness and indifferency, have we thought of God, his per-

* Ephes. ii. 12.

fections,

fections, works, and ways? Where has been that dependance upon his power, providence, and grace, that we ought to have exercised? Have we not set up idols in our hearts, and bowed down to them, in violation of that great command, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve †. If we have acknowledged him with our lips, have none of us denied Him in our lives, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate? ‡ When we have been in pursuit of the world and sin, did our unbelieving atheistical hearts never say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it? § Instead of acknowledging God in all our ways, and asking help and direction from him, have we not leaned to our own understanding? And if our plans and endeavours have succeeded, instead of returning to give glory to God, have we not sacrificed to our own net, and burnt incense to our own drag? as though by them our portion was become fat, and our meat plenteous ||. When all things

† Luke iv. 8.

§ Psal. xciv. 7.

‡ Tit. i. 16.

|| Hab. i. 15, 16.

have

have gone according to our wishes, have we not ascribed to *second* causes the glory which was due to the *first* and *great* Cause? And when we have met with crosses and disappointments, have we not either fretted against the Providence of God, or vented our spleen upon instruments? without paying a due regard to the great Governor of the world, who *bles*ses or *blast*s just as he pleases!

Now surely, if this is the case (and can we say it has *not* been the case with us, more or less?) we have no reason to wonder that the Lord has a controversy with us. *Impiety* and *infidelity* are provoking sins. They carry a high degree of guilt in them; and have a tendency to draw down the tokens of the Divine Displeasure. God is jealous of the honour of his Name, and Government in the world; and will not suffer his Majesty to be degraded, or his Glory to be given to another *. Where such an irreligious atheistical temper is *prevalent* in any place, nothing can be expected but

* Isaiah xlii. 8.

some

some wasting judgment; and, amongst other things, we find it is threatened with the punishment of *fire*. Ezek. xx. 47. and following. Say to the forest of the South, Hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree; the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the South to the North shall be burnt therein.—And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it, it shall not be quenched. Then said I, Ah! Lord God, they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?—They were grown so regardless of God, and his Providence, that they mocked his Prophet, and scornfully rejected the messages he brought them. Shall they go unpunished?—No. Behold, I will kindle a fire, saith the Lord.

2. An excessive attachment to the world, and the things of it; especially if accompanied with unlawful methods of prosecution.

Alas! hath not the world engrossed those thoughts and pains, and that time, which ought to have been employed about the

more important concerns of religion, our souls, and eternity? An honest industry is *lawful*—is *commendable*—is a *duty*. But there may be such an excess, even in a *lawful* prosecution of the good things of this life, as may be highly provoking to the blessed God, and may awaken his righteous displeasure. And if so, how much more provoking must it be where *unwarrantable measures* are entered into and pursued! Wo to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high—for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.—Behold! is it not of the Lord of Hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire? Habak. ii. 9, & *seq.* It is no wonder if ill-gotten goods are turned into fuel for the devouring flames. So it is often threatened by the Prophets they *shall* be. See, for one instance among many, Ezek. xxiii. 18. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee; and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them

them that behold thee. When such a judgment as this is sent upon a place, the fire oftentimes devours promiscuously; yet the unrighteous practices of some individuals may be one great cause of its kindling. Charity thinketh no evil of any man; yet surely, when our habitations are consumed, and our possessions are diminished, it becomes us to consider, whether or no that was *unjustly gotten*, or *unjustly kept*, which by the Providence of God is *justly* injured and destroyed!

3. A neglect of family-religion.

God himself is the original Founder, the watchful Preserver, the supream Ruler, and chief Benefactor of families. And should He not be acknowledged and adored as *such*?—If we are to pray *every where* *, and with *all* prayer †, *i. e.* with all *sorts* of prayer; who dare exclude family-devotion out of that comprehensive *All*! But if there were no Scripture-*precepts* for this duty, there are many Scripture-*precedents*

* 1 Tim. ii. 8.

† Eph. vi. 18.

to support and authorize it. Yea, it is so obvious, that the very *Heathens* practised it. The light of Nature taught them, that where a family is settled, divine worship should be celebrated. And if they had a service for false gods in their Houses, should not Christians for the True God? Surely it is but reasonable, that those who want and receive daily and nightly mercies together, should every morning and evening offer up their joint petitions and thanksgivings.

But how wretched a neglect is there in *most* families upon this head! And has there been no neglect of this kind in any of *our* families? Had we every one taken up *Joshua's* resolution, As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord? * Or did not Some of us rise up in the morning, and go about the busineses of the day, and then lie down in the evening, without calling upon God? If God had not an *altar* in our houses, no wonder they are demolished. If the sacred fire of devotion was not found there, no wonder a material

* Josh. xxiv. 15.

Fire was commissioned to reduce them to ashes. Let us think of that terrible passage in the Prophet, Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name †.

4. Sabbath-profanation; that is another sin which might have had an hand in bringing this calamity upon us.

The command is, remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy *. 'Tis a day which the holy God has set apart for himself; for the honour of his holy name, and an attendance upon his holy word and ordinances. On that day we are to rid our hands, and heads, and hearts, of worldly business, and worldly diversions; and engage ourselves to approach unto God. Now, if Sabbaths are trampled under foot; if there is little or no difference made between Sabbath-time and common time; we have nothing to expect but that the anger of the Lord will kindle against us. If you will not hearken

† Jer. x. 25.

* Ex. xx. 8.

unto me, to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not bear a burthen even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day, then will I kindle a Fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched †. If the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not desist from prophaning the Sabbath, Jerusalem shall be wrapt in flames. This threatening was executed; as may be seen, 2 Kings xxv. 8, and following.

And have we not reason to think that *this* sin was *one* of the causes of the late *dreadful conflagration*? Did we, as we ought, remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day? Did none of us give way to business, to idleness, or recreation? Did none of us turn our backs upon the house of God, and refuse to give him glory by waiting upon him in the solemn assembly?—It has been thought that this sacred day has not been *so strictly* observed in this town, of late, as it was some years ago.—If we wilfully absent ourselves from the house *of God*, it is but

† Jer. xvii. 27.

just with God to banish us out of our *own* houses.

5. An undervaluing of Gospel Grace.

This is threatened with vengeance and Burning. Mat. xxii. 2. and onward. The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, &c. but they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But, when the king heard thereof he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. We have had the free and gracious offers of the Gospel—have been invited and entreated again and again to be reconciled to God, who is in and through Christ, reconciling the world (believing Gentiles, as well as Jews) to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them,

them, but to him ; whom he hath made to be sin (a sin-offering) for us, though he knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him *. Christ has stood a long time knocking at our doors—but, have not Many of us stopped our ears, like the deaf adder, and refused the grace that has been tendered to us ? If we have not sat in the seat of the scornful, and turned the great subjects of the Gospel into banter and ridicule ; (from which, perhaps, some amongst us can hardly clear ourselves) yet, can we say, we have prized the Gospel as we ought ? have we been so *sensible* of our privileges, and so *thankful* for them as we should have been ? Have we not entertained too *low thoughts* of Christ, and the way of salvation in and by him ? Have we not minded our farm and our merchandise, our business and pleasures, more than Christ, and his covenant, and promises ? If we have undervalued these *better* things, we have no room to complain of hard dealing, now God in his providence has made an in-

* 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21,

road upon those *inferior* things, to which we have so shamefully given the preference.

6. And lastly, A refusing to be reformed by past visitations.

It is mentioned as the great sin of Israel of old, that they did not lay to heart, so as to be humbled under, and reformed by, the judgments of God that had been sent upon them. Isa. xlii. 24, 25. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he, against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on Fire round about, yet he knew not: and it *Burned* him, yet he laid it not to heart. We have, once, and again, been visited in *this* way. The flames have had a commission to destroy, first one part of the town, then another *. But did we lay it to heart

* *First*, on the 11th of June 1665, when *nineteen*, —then, on the 6th of September, when *eight* dwellings were consumed.

in a becoming manner? Did we humble ourselves before God, and repent of our sins, and return to him, from whom we had departed?—I wish we could say we did. —Was there more watchfulness, more prayerfulness, more Sabbath-sanctification, more diligent attendance upon divine institutions, more mercy and compassion, more justice and charity?——I wish we could say there was.

These may be considered as some of the sins on account of which, the Lord is contending with us. It were easy to instance in others. Such as, falsehood and deceit—ingratitude for, and abuse of the gifts of divine bounty—fornication and uncleanness—a prophane and an irreverent use of the sacred name of God, and the like. If these things be duly considered, we may well say, All this is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses!

II. Another head of consideration is, the *duties* and *graces* which the present frowning Providence calls for.

Amongst

Amongst others I would mention the following.

1. It becomes us to eye and acknowledge the *hand* of God.

God is the great disposer of all events. He lifts up, and casts down; gives an increase, and causes a diminution. "I am God, and there is none else. I kill, and I make alive; I form the light, and create darkness; I send peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things *." It was a profane speech of an abandon'd sinner, This evil is of the Lord; Why should I wait for the Lord any longer †? Had he stopped at the first clause, and spoke it with a right disposition of mind, he had spoken well: for, is there evil in a city (or town) and the Lord has not done it ‡? By whatever means or accident the fire was kindled, it must be regarded as the messenger of the Lord of hosts. The flames had a *divine* commission, and proceeded under a *divine* direction.

* Isaiah, xlv. 7.

† 2 Kings, vi. 33.

‡ Amos, iii. 6.

2. To subscribe to the *righteousness* of God.

This has been the practice of the saints from one age to another. So did Nehemiah. Addressing himself to God upon the desolation of Jerusalem, he says, Howbeit, thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly *.——So did Daniel †. He hath confirmed his words which he spake against us, by bringing upon us a great evil: the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth, for we obeyed not his voice.——So did the Church ‡. The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandments.——So should every one of us say; “The
 “ Lord is righteous in bringing upon me
 “ this dreadful calamity, and would have
 “ been so had he made it much *more*
 “ dreadful. If when I fled from one fire
 “ another had overtaken and devoured me,
 “ still the Lord had been righteous. Had
 “ he given the flames a commission to

* Neh. ix. 33.

† Dan. ix. 12.

‡ Lam. i. 18.

“ burn

“ burn up *every house*, and to consume
 “ *every inhabitant*, still the Lord had been
 “ righteous. Had I been dealt with ac-
 “ cording to the demerit of my sins, I
 “ should, long ago, have been stripped of all
 “ my possessions—my *soul* would have been
 “ required at my hands; and body and
 “ soul would have been devoted to un-
 “ speakably more intolerable, and abso-
 “ lutely unquenchable flames.”

3. To be humble.

And this, indeed, will naturally accom-
 pany the former. If we heartily subscribe
 to the righteousness of God, we shall lie
 low before him, and repent as in dust and
 ashes. Pride is, *at any time*, very unbe-
 coming a creature, who is, and must be,
 constantly dependent; but in a time of
bereavement and *desolation*, it is *peculiarly*
 unbecoming. How *foolish* a thing is it to
 be proud of our trade, our strength, our
 riches, our policy, our cloaths, our dwel-
 lings, or whatever else we lay claim to,
 when all of a sudden our glory may be
 laid in the dust! Let us see to it then,
 that

that we humble ourselves before the Lord. 'Tis what God *expects* from us, and we shall be inexcuseable if we don't do so. Let us humble ourselves each one for his own *personal* sins; let heads of families humble themselves for *family*-sins; and let us humble ourselves on account of the sins of the *Town in general*. 'Tis our *duty*, and 'twill be for our *interest*. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time*.

4. To be patient, thankful, and chearful.

Far be it from us to *murmur* and *repine*, because we are chastened of the Lord. Let us restrain our passions, and hold our peace, and meekly acquiesce in the divine disposals. Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins†? I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him‡. Aaron held his peace||, and did not utter

* 1 Pet. v. 6.

† Mic. vii. 9.

‡ Lam. iii. 39.

|| Lev. x. 3.

a discontented word, when his *sons* were destroyed by fire; which, to every tender-hearted parent, would be much more grievous than to have his *habitation* consumed. While the rod of God is upon our backs, our hands should be upon our mouths. It may not be easy, *at first*, to be silent and submissive; but 'tis a temper of mind, which if, through Grace, we are enabled to attain to, will be very advantageous. Impatience is its own punishment: instead of *lightning*, 'twill *encrease* the burthen. Be *patient* therefore, brethren; and in patience possess your souls *.

And let us be *thankful* too. Thankful for the calamity, considered in itself, we cannot be: for evil of every kind is the object of a natural aversion. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless, if it yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, we shall bless God that ever he was pleased thus to exercise us †.

* Luke xxi. 19.

† Hebr. xii. 11.

Particularly,

Particularly, in the present calamity, there are many circumstances that loudly call for thankfulness. Shall we not be thankful that we were not surpris'd with a *midnight* cry? when the darkness of the night would have given an additional horror to the ghastly scene.—Shall we not be thankful that our *all* is not consumed by that merciless element?—Shall we not be thankful that our *lives* are given us for a prey?—Shall we not be thankful that the Lord was pleas'd at length to put a stop to the fury of the flames?—We have suffer'd by *fire*—but shall we not be thankful that, instead thereof, we did not suffer by the *sword*, by *famine*, by *pestilence*, or by an *earthquake*? The command is, in *every thing* give thanks†. Surely, in the *present* case, we have abundant reason for thanksgiving. We are too apt to consider what we have *lost*; but we should do well to consider what *remains*, and how much *worse* it might have been with us than it is. In short, let us be thankful that we are not consign'd over to the flames of hell.

† 1 Thess. v. 18.

Nor let us forget to be *cheerful*. Vain, and frothy, and unaffected we should not be; but humbly *cheerful* we *may*, and *ought* to be. Because we have lost our dwellings, and lost our possessions in part, shall we therefore throw away our peace? Were we to do so, we should be enemies to ourselves, and reflect a dishonour upon the holy religion we profess; as though there was not enough in *that* to bear up our spirits, and keep us from fainting in the day of adversity.

5. To see to it, and make it sure to ourselves, that we have a dwelling in God.

The blessed God is represented to us, in the sacred Scriptures, under various notions; and amongst others, under that of a *Dwelling Place*. Lord, says Moses, thou hast been our Dwelling Place in all generations *. 'Tis the privilege of a true Believer that he dwells in God; and there he dwells safely, and may be quiet from fear of evil †. If our earthly dwellings be ever

* Psal. xc. 1.

† Prov. i. 33.

so strong, and stately, and elegant, we can never say we are safe in *them*. A raging FIRE will soon spoil their beauty, and demolish their strength, and sink them into feebleness, deformity, and ruins. But this *Divine Dwelling* can never receive damage. Though we have no material house to dwell in, yet if we have a *God* to dwell in, we are undoubtedly safe. Safe in him, and safe in regard to a succeeding eternity. Under the shadow of the *Almighty* the Christian continually abides, and there he cannot be injured.

6, and lastly. To secure an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Whether our earthly houses are burnt, or not burnt, it will not be long ere we know them no more for ever. The uncertainty of the Tenure by which we hold them, and the absolute certainty that we shall abide in them but a little while, should be considered as a motive to us to look out for and endeavour, through Divine Grace, to get an *evidence* of our right to a better habitation: an habitation that we shall

shall never be forced to leave—an habitation that shall never be destroyed.

But 'tis time we proceed to the

III. and last head of consideration ; and that is, *The Supports and Consolations* which the present trial admits of.

Blessed be God, we are not left in a hopeless, comfortless condition. Here is *Mercy* in the midst of *Judgment*. The Lord hath not let out *all* his wrath.

I. 'Tis supporting and reviving to think, that the flames have not proved as fatal to our *persons*, as they have to our *habitations*.

Here the impenitent sinner (if made *sensible* by the alarming Providence) may reflect, “ What if *my person* had been seized
 “ by the relentless element, and *my poor*
 “ *soul* had been hurried, with all its guilt
 “ upon its head, into an awful eternity ;
 “ where had I been then ! I had gone
 “ from one fire to another ! from a fire on

“ earth to a fire in hell; where I should
 “ have been ever burning, and never have
 “ been consumed! Well may I be glad
 “ that I am spared; that my day of life,
 “ and my day of grace is lengthened out,
 “ and I have yet time and space to repent,
 “ and to pursue the things which belong to
 “ my everlasting peace. Lord, give me
 “ thy Grace so to do.”——The doubting
 Christian may be supported under his sufferings, by recollecting that he has a further opportunity granted him to make his calling and election sure; and to get into a better frame and posture for appearing before God in judgment.

2. 'Tis consolatory to reflect that we are not totally abandoned.

That we are not left destitute of a place where to lay our head; that the hearts, and hands, and houses, of our friends are open to us, when our *own* hearts are faint, and our *own* hands are feeble, and our *own* houses are laid in ashes. We have food, and raiment, and shelter left, notwithstanding what we have lost.

3. If we belong to God, our best interest is secure.

That, is not subject to the accidents of time. The covenant of grace, and the blessings thereof, are strong and stable. We have a treasure laid up in heaven, which cannot be impaired; which we shall not be deprived of by moth, or rust, or thieves, or *flames*. The genuine Christian is a *happy* person, be his circumstances in the world what they will. He has chosen that good part which shall never be taken away from him *. If God be our God, he is ours for ever and ever †. If Christ be our Saviour, he lives for ever; and because he lives, we shall live also ‡. If we have a title to heaven as our home, *that's* an *abiding* city.

4. All things shall work together for good to them that love God.

Our unbelieving hearts are apt to say, "All these things are against me §." But

* Luke x. 42.

† John, xiv. 19.

‡ Psal. xlviii. 14.

§ Gen. xlii. 36.

Faith will reply, " Why art thou cast
 " down, O my soul; and why art thou
 " disquieted within me? Hope in God,
 " for I shall yet praise him, who is the
 " health of my countenance, and my
 " God †. 'Tis, if *need be*, I am in heavi-
 " ness ‡. The Lord, infinitely *wise*, and
 " transcendently *gracious*, has seen fit to
 " involve me in this distress; but still I
 " must conclude all *is* well, and all will
 " *end* well. He that has diminished, can
 " increase, if he sees fit. If it be for my
 " *real* welfare, this loss shall be made up,
 " and I shall behold a brighter scene. But
 " if these things be not restored in *kind*, I
 " shall have an *equivalent*: and if what I
 " lose in *temporals*, be made up in *spirituals*,
 " I shall be an infinite gainer; and shall
 " have reason to say, O happy disappoint-
 " ment! Gainful loss! Comfortable dis-
 " tress! Comfortable in its *consequences*,
 " though not in *itself*. The Lord God is a
 " sun and shield; the Lord will give grace
 " and glory: no good thing will he with-
 " hold from them that walk uprightly. O

† Psal. xlii. 11.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 6.

“ Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that
“ trusteth in thee *.”

5. Christ and the Saints have been as destitute as we.

As destitute?—That’s an expression far short of the truth. They have been much *more* destitute. Our blessed Lord, while in the word, was in a forlorn condition. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, says he †, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. The great architect of the universe had not a house to reside in. Wonder O heavens! Be astonished, O earth! Now surely, the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. ’Tis enough for the disciple, if he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord ‡. Though we had no place of shelter, but were obliged to wander up and down without an home, we see to whom we should be conformed.—And as for the saints, they have been in the *same* condition. Many of God’s chosen

* Psal. lxxxiv. 11, 12.

† Mat. viii. 20.

‡ Mat. x. 24, 25.

ones have had their inheritance turned to strangers, and their houses to aliens *, which was as bad—was *worse* than if they had been consumed by fire. The Apostle Paul says of himself and others, † Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place. And of the primitive worthies, he informs us, ‡ that they wandered in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

6. and lastly. With regard to *true believers*, there is no *judicial anger* in this, nor any other affliction.

Paternal anger there *may* be, but, *judicial* anger there is *none*. When a calamity of a general kind is inflicted, very often, there is little, if any, distinction made. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent §. But then, the nature of the calamity is *different*. “ If

* Lam. v. 2.

† 1 Cor. iv. 11.

‡ Heb. xi. 37, 38.

§ Job, ix. 23.

“ God

“ God be my Father, this visitation is only
 “ a *fatherly chastisement*; and there is *love*
 “ in his *heart* towards me, though there be
 “ a *rod* in his hand.”

Thus have we gone through the several heads of consideration proposed. As to the sins which may have been the occasion of this so dreadful a calamity—the graces and duties to be cultivated and practised—and the supports and consolations to be imbibed.

May the Lord, by his Spirit, set home these things upon our hearts; and help us seriously to pause upon them, till we feel the energy of them upon our inmost souls!

I might here propose some considerations to those who have *escaped* the violence of the fire. Such should consider—how much concerned they are to guard against those sins which have a tendency to bring on the same, or a worse judgment—How dangerous a state of carnal security is—How

F diabolical

diabolical a spirit it is to rejoice in the ruin of their neighbours——How much they are bound to pity, and pray for, and help the afflicted——How ready they should be to acknowledge the goodness of God in their own preservation—and the like. But not to enlarge on these things, I shall close with one consideration distinct from what has been already mentioned; and it is this.

If the late fire (comparatively of so *small* an extent) was so alarming and awful, how much *more* awful and alarming will that UNIVERSAL CONFLAGRATION be, when the Earth, and all things therein, shall be *burnt up!* nothing, nothing left.——*Then* shall no place of *retreat* be found. Not only *houses* and *goods*, but *fields* and *floods*, *rocks* and *mountains*, shall feel its irresistible force. The impenitent inhabitants will then weep and wail. O, the shrieks, the cries and groans, that will every where be heard!——Happy they that shall be found in Christ; for *they*, like the three worthies in *Nebuchadnezzar's* fiery furnace, shall be
6 unhurt.

unhurt. Seeing then we look for so inconceivably tremendous a scene as this, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! *

* 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11.

F I N I S.



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